

5. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 43, further comprising:

a chain conveyor wound by a pair of chain wheels and having a run thereof extending along the respective die or counter-die but beyond the encumbrance thereof; and

wherein said extraction pick-up means comprises a plurality of extraction plates carried at predetermined intervals from each other on said conveyor, each extraction plate being fitted with extraction plate receiving holes with equatorial shoulders for retaining the thermoformed articles in proper orientation during their conveyance.

6. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 43, further comprising a template conveyor conveying at least one of said receiving conveying templates, said template conveyor extending through at least one work and/or treatment station and moving stepwise at the opening-closure rate of the dies for receiving thermoformed articles from an extraction plate associated with said extraction pick-up means, said extraction plate withdrawing a thermoformed article from the female die and transferring it to said conveying template, said template conveyor conveying the thermoformed articles in sequence to said at least one work and/or treatment station along the template conveyor.

7. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor conveys two alternate movable templates of the receiving conveying templates, so that one of said movable templates is moved laterally, in relation to the female die, at said at least one work and/or treatment station, while the other movable template is in front of it to receive a thermoformed article from the extraction plate.

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Sub I 47  
8. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor is a chain conveyor which comprises a pair of chain wheels around which a respective chain is wound, a plurality of said receiving conveying templates being carried, spaced at a predetermined distance from each other, on said chain conveyor and wherein said retention means comprises equatorial shoulders retaining the thermoformed articles in proper orientation during their conveyance.

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Sub I 46  
10. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 43, wherein said retention means further comprises a truncated conical collar adjacent each receiving hole.

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Sub I 87  
12. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said collar comprises a plurality of resiliently loaded ratchets, installed in said collar and movable towards its internal diameter for engaging with the external surface of a thermoformed article in said receiving hole.

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Sub I 107  
14. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein the thermoformed articles have rims and wherein said receiving conveying template has a peripheral recess formed on the exterior surface of the template about the receiving hole for engaging the rim of a thermoformed article received in the receiving hole.

#8  
Sub IV

43. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus comprising:  
a thermoforming machine fitted with at least one female die; and  
extraction pick-up means adapted to withdraw a thermoformed article from the female die [and to transfer it to a receiving station], said extraction pick-up means including a receiving seat for each thermoformed article to be extracted, wherein the thermoforming machine is fitted with at least one counter-die, the at least one female die and counter-die being reciprocally approachable and removable for the operations of closing, thermoforming and opening, the apparatus further comprising a feeder for feeding thermoforming material between each female die and counter-die, and at least one receiving station adapted to receive one or more thermoformed articles, wherein said receiving station comprises one or more receiving conveying [template] templates, each receiving conveying template having an exterior surface and one or more receiving holes disposed within said template and communicating with said exterior surface, each receiving hole adapted to engage a thermoformed article and having an interior dimension which is smallest in a region remote from said exterior surface to define a retention means for resiliently holding a thermoformed article disposed in the hole.

#9  
Sub IV

45. (Amended) A thermoforming apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein said template conveyor comprises a carousel conveyor having at least three arms angularly spaced apart each supporting a respective receiving conveying template.